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PIANISTS AND THE EUROPEAN MUSIC TRADE 1790-1820

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THIS CHAPTER EXAMINES SOME of the factors that shaped the careers of pianists in the period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, especially in Paris. War, the economy, legal and social matters all proved to be important, but the essential starting point for this investigation must be the events that shaped Europe in this period, of which a very brief summary follows. 1789 saw the storming of the Bastille in Paris and prompted other major events of the French Revolution that led to the execution of Louis XVI in 1793. From 1792 France was at war with Austria, Prussia, Belgium and the Netherlands and from the following year with most of Europe, including England. A variety of alliances among European partners, and partners further afield, were formed against France over the following twenty years. Within France fundamental social upheavals took place accompanied by bloodshed and regime change lasting initially until 1799, when Napoleon rose to power. Soon afterwards negotiations began that led to the signing of the Treaty of Amiens on 25 March 1802 and there followed a brief period of peace in Europe. However, within little over a year hostilities resumed and in 1804 Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor. He then began to tighten his grip on Europe, extending French domination to its peak in 1812. Unsuccessful campaigns and dissatisfaction at home followed, leading to his exile to Elba in 1814, from which he returned briefly, only to be defeated at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815. Thereafter the monarchy was restored in France, and although political instability continued there was at least peace between European nations.

These events had a significant effect on Europe's economies, but they were not the only factors to affect national prosperity. Positive and negative effects occurred as a result of changing patterns of trade, fluctuations in food production and commodity prices, the development of new technology, demographic change and so on, all of which had localised effects. So although Europe was at war for a period of almost 25 years it cannot be said that its various national economies were consistently and adversely affected throughout that period. Economic historians have identified particular periods of downturn in individual

DAVID ROWLAND

nations and regions and their studies reveal a complex picture in which the fluctuations in prosperity in any one country do not match those of its neighbours. So, for example, the following years have been identified as periods of economic downturn in England — 1793-1794, 1797, 1801, 1808 and 1812 — whereas different periods have been identified as periods of downturn in France — 1789-1790, 1793, 1806-1807 and 1815. Occasionally, however, the downturns in individual countries coalesced so that it is possible to speak of continental-wide recession, which has been identified in the following years; 1789-1790, 1792-1793 and 1811-1812¹.

Since the disposable income of the population affected all elements of the music business, including concert life, the sale of instruments and music, and music tuition, it is unsurprising that music businesses found these years of economic downturn difficult. Throughout the period there were fluctuations in the fortunes of some of Europe's major music instrument makers, retailers and publishers, and the failures of many of them coincide with periods of recession. So, for example, the London firm Longman & Broderip's inept financial management was exacerbated by the economic problems of the mid-1790s and bankruptcy proceedings were begun against them in May 1795². The seeds of the collapse of Dussek's London music business were sown around the time of the 1797 downturn³. Of course, the general state of economies was only one factor that affected the prosperity of music businesses, but it was not unusual for the effects of other frailties — such as poor financial management, partnership changes and difficulties, or legal problems — to become magnified at times of economic stress.

International trade was an important element in the success of Europe's larger music firms in this period and the conditions under which this trade took place changed significantly between 1790 and 1820⁴. Following a period of relatively low import tariffs on both sides of the English Channel the onset of war in 1793 and the introduction of various measures restricting the import of English goods into France made it increasingly difficult for English goods to reach French markets. The situation was further exacerbated in 1806 when the French authorities began a naval blockade of English ships to reinforce import bans. At the same time the so-called Continental System was introduced, which aimed to

¹. All economic data from *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe*, 2 vols., edited by Stephen Broadberry and Kevin H. O'Rourke, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010, vol. 1: 1700-1870, p. 134.

². NEX, Jenny. 'Longman & Broderip', in: *The Music Trade in Georgian England*, edited by Michael Kassler, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 9-93, especially pp. 72ff.

³. ROWLAND, David. 'Dussek in London's Commercial World', in: *Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760-1812): A Bohemian Composer 'en voyage' through Europe*, edited by Roberto Illiano and Rohan H. Stewart-MacDonald, Bologna, Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2012 (Quaderni clementiani, 4), pp. 87-112

⁴. For an account of the effects of events in France on trade with England see CROUZET, François. 'The Impact of the French Wars on the British Economy', in: *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, edited by H. T. Dickinson, Basingstoke, MacMillan Education Ltd., 1989 (Problems in focus, 389), pp. 189-209.

encourage French trade with continental Europe and to exclude Britain from continental markets. After 1815 many of these international trade restrictions were eased.

The effects of these developments on the piano trade were far-reaching. It is well-known that in the eighteenth century English pianos were exported to many parts of Europe and copied in significant numbers, playing an important part in music making in Paris and elsewhere⁵. But from around 1790 it became increasingly difficult for London firms to sell their pianos in Europe. The situation is well-illustrated in a letter written by the pianist Himmel to Clementi on 18 May 1802 in which Himmel advises Clementi on the difficulties associated with importing an English upright grand piano into France:

I am writing to you concerning an upright fortepiano for Mr. de Grisenoy, Director of the famous Concert de Clery here. While Mr. de Grisenoy has wanted to have one of these magnificent instruments, he will have to be patient, because the French government, in order to protect French factories, has given the order that no English Instrument is to enter France, and Mr. De Grisenoy sees no other way than to have it sent from London to Hamburg, and in Hamburg to aim to get hold of a document which authenticates that this Instrument belongs to a person who wishes to reside and remain in France. This is the great difficulty for your instruments in France. Mr. de Grisenoy will correspond with you on this subject, but the difficulty seems to me insuperable⁶.

The letter describes a loophole that instrument dealers exploited, which enabled instrument to cross national borders with their individual owners. But even this practice did not go un-challenged, as Malou Haine has demonstrated from the evidence of a series of documents that demonstrate the protectionist attitude of French piano makers and their government⁷, and the French authorities increasingly tightened their control on imports.

⁵. See, for example, COLE, Michael. *The Pianoforte in the Classical Era*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, pp. 81-86.

⁶. «Je vous ecrive a raison d'un Fortepiano Up reight pour Mr: de Grisenoy, Directeur du fameux Concert de Clery ici: Tant que Mr: de Grisenoy desireroit d'avoir un de ces superbes Instruments, il faut qu'il resigne, a cause que le Gouvernement francais, pour proteger les fabriques dans Son pays a donnè l'ordre, qu'aucun Instrument Anglais doit entrer en France, et Mr: de Grisenoy ne voit pas d'autre moyen, que de le faire aller de Londres a Hambourg, et a Hambourg chercher de se faire donner un pappier d'autenticite que cet Instrument appartient a une personne, qui veut demeurer et rester en France. Voila la grande difficultè pour Vos Instruments en France. Mr: de Grisenoy se mettra en correspondance sur cet objet avec Vous, mais la difficultè me paroît invincible»; quoted in CLEMENTI, Muzio. *The Correspondence of Muzio Clementi / La corrispondenza di Muzio Clementi*, critical edition by David Rowland, Bologna, Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2010 (Muzio Clementi Opera Omnia, Italian National Edition under the direction of Roberto Illiano, 14), pp. 85-86.

⁷. HAINE, Malou. *Les facteurs d'instruments de musique à Paris au XIX^e siècle: des artisans face à l'industrialisation*, Brussels, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1985 (Faculté de philosophie et lettres, 94), pp. 60-63.

DAVID ROWLAND

It was about two months after Himmel's letter was written that Clementi left London for Paris on a business trip that was to last for eight years. Clementi had already become well-acquainted with Ignace Pleyel and the latter had invited Clementi to stay with him in Paris while they investigated some business opportunities of mutual concern⁸. Clementi's plan was to sell more pianos in France and he had written to Pleyel on 20 October 1801 expressing his wish to set up a piano factory, or an agency for his pianos in France⁹.

Clementi's plans may have been inspired by the multinational model established by Sebastian Erard, whom Clementi knew, and who set up the family's harp-making business in London in 1792 which complemented their Paris-based piano business. As far as it is possible to tell from the firm's records, they did not exchange instruments between London and Paris, thereby avoiding international trading problems and we must assume that the pianos that were sold in Paris were made there, while the harps were made in London¹⁰. Nevertheless, they continued to be able to exchange money, people and presumably intellectual property, in the form of instrument designs, between Paris and London¹¹. Some patents for piano actions were taken out in London, but there is no evidence that the firm made pianos in London during the eighteenth century¹².

Clementi's plan to establish a factory in Paris in cooperation with Pleyel came to nothing. His second option, to establish an agency in Paris, was impossible, because of the international trading restrictions we have already considered. With neither option open to him Clementi had little reason to remain in Paris. He left for Vienna after only a few weeks and by the end of the year he was in St. Petersburg. The choice of St. Petersburg was a good one commercially. While it may have been difficult to move pianos across the English Channel, the export of goods across the North Sea and into the Baltic was easier, because the French had no control of those waters. However, St. Petersburg was some way to the East and a more convenient port for importing pianos into Germany, but still accessed from the Baltic, was the Polish city of Stettin (Szczecin), not far from Berlin. In his letters Clementi makes several references to this port where a number of the firm's goods were sent prior to it falling to the French in 1806, as Napoleon claimed ever more land to the East. The effect on Clementi's piano business of the removal of a relatively easy route for his pianos into Europe via the Baltic was significant and it seems likely that his firm exported many fewer pianos into Europe after that, since references in

⁸. See CLEMENTI, Muzio. *Op. cit.* (see note 6), pp. cxvii-cxviii for further details of Clementi's relationship with Pleyel.

⁹. *Ibidem*, p. 77.

¹⁰. Information from the London firm's records in the Royal College of Music, London.

¹¹. BARTHEL, Laure – ROUDIER, Alain. *Mon bien cher oncle: correspondance de Pierre Erard à Sébastien Erard*, Geneva, Minkoff, 2006.

¹². For details of actions and patents see CLARKE, Christopher. 'Erard and Broadwood in the Classical Era; Two Schools of Piano Making', in: *Musique-Images-Instruments: Revue française d'organologie et d'iconographie musicale (Le pianoforte en France 1780-1820)*, no. 11 (2009), pp. 98-125.

PIANISTS AND THE EUROPEAN MUSIC TRADE 1790-1820

his correspondence to the sale of pianos decline after this date. Instead, Clementi turned his attention to acquiring music for the publishing side of his business.

With these sorts of pressures on the English piano industry it is no wonder that its influence in Europe declined in the early nineteenth century, leaving the way open for the French to dominate. However, the French only became a real international power in piano making in the 1830s, because of the slowness with which the grand piano gained ground in Paris. The reasons for this lie beyond the international trading environment.

In the 1790s there is no doubt that the piano industry was more developed in London than anywhere else. The number of pianos produced there was high, the instrument featured prominently in concerts, and it overtook the harpsichord in popularity at an early date. By comparison, the two most prominent piano makers in France, Pleyel and Erard, whose instruments would be so influential later on, only very gradually developed their businesses. Pleyel did not make pianos until 1807¹³, and while Erard had success with his square pianos in the closing decades of the eighteenth century, he made grand pianos only in relatively small numbers before the 1830s. The following table contains figures drawn from a study of Erard grand pianos by Thierry Maniguet¹⁴.

YEAR	NUMBER OF GRAND PIANOS PRODUCED BY ERARD
1797	5
1798	10
1799	9
1800	11
1801	35
1802	48
1803	36
1804	18
1805	25
1806	8
1807	24
1808	27
1809	0
1810	31
1811	48
1812	21
1813	8

¹³. BENTON, Rita. 'Pleyel as Music Publisher', in: *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, xxxii/1 (Spring 1979), pp. 134-135.

¹⁴. MANIGUET, Thierry. 'Le piano en forme de clavecin Érard', in: *Musique-Images-Instruments [...]*, *op. cit.* (see note 12), pp. 86, 91.

DAVID ROWLAND

YEAR	NUMBER OF GRAND PIANOS PRODUCED BY ERARD
1814	8
1815	7
1816	12
1817	12
1818	29
1819	8
1820	8

The total numbers of grand pianos made by Erard in the years 1797 to 1820 was therefore 448, a small fraction of the number produced by Broadwood in London, who by 1802 had already made about two thousand five hundred grands¹⁵.

We cannot be sure why the grand piano achieved so little popularity in Paris. It may be that particular financial constraints on wealthier individuals meant that there was only a small potential market, but as we have seen, the French economy suffered only sporadically through the period, so affordability alone may not have been the reason. Another possible reason is that the piano was regarded as more of an accompanying instrument and not so suited to solo concert performance as it was in England, despite the fact that the newly-formed Paris Conservatoire placed such an emphasis on piano performance.

Running alongside the instrument-making industry, and developing just as rapidly, was music publishing, which was also affected by a range of economic and other issues in the period. In addition to the factors that affected musical instrument making, copyright law was a major issue for the publishers. Copyright provision varied from country to country in this period. In England it was finally established in 1777 that copyright law applied to music¹⁶. In France, copyright law was established in 1793, but it was also later clarified that the law offered less protection to non-French composers than it did to its own citizens¹⁷. There was no single law that covered German-speaking areas, where musicians were variously protected by legislation in each state. Most important of all, there was no international copyright in this period. If musicians and publishers wanted to protect their works from the pirates the only realistic way to do so was to secure simultaneous publication of individual works in different countries.

The movement around Europe of intellectual property such as compositions was not as problematic as the movement of manufactured goods such as instruments. The

¹⁵. CLARKE, Christopher. *Op. cit.* (see note 12), p. 100.

¹⁶. For details of English copyright see SMALL, John. 'The Development of Musical Copyright', in: *The Music Trade in Georgian England, op. cit.* (see note 2), pp. 233-386.

¹⁷. For details of French and German copyright law and its relation to music see KALLBERG, Jeffrey. *The Chopin Sources: Variants and Versions in Later Manuscripts and Printed Editions*, unpublished Ph.D. Diss., Chicago (IL), The University of Chicago, 1982, pp. 24-29.

correspondence of a number of composers, including Beethoven and Clementi, shows that copies of their works were delivered to publishers across Europe throughout the period under discussion, even if the problems of war sometimes led to the loss or delay of some manuscripts. But if simultaneous publication was to be achieved it required a high degree of cooperation between publishers across international boundaries. In this respect the pianist/composers of the 1790s who already had international careers and contacts, and who went into the publishing business, were very well-placed to achieve success. Both Clementi and Dussek, who both had publishing enterprises in London in the 1790s, knew Pleyel very well and the relationship proved to be mutually useful to their businesses. Having established his music business in Paris in 1795 Pleyel was in London in the middle of the following year and made a press announcement in July 1796 saying that all of his works in the future, and the works of a number of other composers whose copyright he owned, would be published by Corri, Dussek & Co.¹⁸. Corri, Dussek & Co. duly published several of Pleyel's works in the months that followed. 1797 saw the publication of *Pleyel, Corri & Dussek's Musical Journal*, many of whose numbers were published in both London and Paris at around the same time. Also published by both firms at around the same time in the late 1790s were several works of Dussek's and Pleyel's mutual friend, J. B. Cramer. In the late 1790s it was evidently not difficult to secure more or less simultaneous publication in London and Paris.

Corri, Dussek & Co.'s firm was failing at the time that Clementi took over as a partner in Longman, Clementi & C. in 1798 and at some time in the following two years Pleyel transferred at least some of his allegiance to Clementi's firm. From the beginning of 1800 onwards there is ample evidence in their mutual correspondence of the two firm's negotiating over copyrights, exchanging works to their mutual benefit, and publishing them at around the same time in England and France¹⁹.

These sorts of reciprocal arrangements existed all over Europe in the 1790s and were a major means of combating the efforts of the pirates. However, because communications became increasingly affected by the war cooperation between publishers became seriously hampered as time went on, as the negotiations for the rights to Beethoven's music between Clementi and the Leipzig firm Breitkopf & Härtel show. Between them, Clementi & Co. and Breitkopf & Härtel put a great deal of effort into negotiating what would have been a single, joint contract with Beethoven which would have secured the rights for his music throughout Europe around 1805. The plan was very ambitious and there is no known precedent for this degree of international coordination, but the negotiations stalled and eventually the publishers reverted to making their own individual arrangements with Beethoven. Apart from Beethoven's ambivalence about the proposed arrangement, one of

¹⁸. For further details of Dussek publishing relationship with Pleyel see ROWLAND, David. 'Dussek in London's Commercial World', *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 87-112.

¹⁹. CLEMENTI, Muzio. *Op. cit.* (see note 6).

DAVID ROWLAND

the main problems was undoubtedly the war, which was intensifying, as Clementi outlined in a letter to Breitkopf & Härtel dated 22 April 1807:

Beethoven and I have become good friends in the end. We have reached an agreement whereby he grants me the rights in the British Isles for 3 quartets, a symphony, an overture, a violin concerto and a pianoforte concerto. I made this agreement with him following on from your letter dated 20 January, in which you told me you were *unable to accept* his proposals because of the war. I asked him to deal with you regarding Germany, etc., etc.²⁰.

A further reference to the war appears in Clementi's letter to his business partner Collard written on the same day:

On account of the impediments by war &c. I begged Beethoven to allow us 4 months (after the setting off of his MS.S.) to publish in. He said he would write to your house in French stating the time, for of course he sends them likewise to Paris &c: &c: and they must appear on the same day²¹.

The extended time period mentioned here was the result of increasingly poor postal arrangements, referred to by Beethoven in a letter of 26 May 1809: «for the moment the uncertainty of the postal arrangements prevents me from dispatching any manuscripts to you»²². Postal problems made the terms of any contract difficult, or even impossible, to fulfill, so that some the works contracted by Beethoven to Clementi were never published by the firm in London, presumably having been lost in transit²³.

Communication problems such as these more or less put an end to simultaneous publication for a few years, as the negotiations between Clementi, Breitkopf & Härtel and Beethoven show. The same trend also emerges in the publication patterns of Johann Baptist Cramer's works²⁴. A detailed examination of their publication dates around Europe shows that it was relatively easy for publishers to arrange for works to appear in one country within a year of them appearing first in another up to c1806. This was the time

²⁰. «Beethoven ed io siam diventati buoni amici alla fine. Abbiamo fatto un accordo, pel quale mi cede la proprietà per li Stati Britannici, in 3 quartetti, una Sinfonia, un'Overtura, un Concerto da Violino ed un Concerto da Piano e Forte. Ho fatto questo accordo con lui in conseguenza della vostra lettera, data di 20 Gennajo, nella quale mi dite non poter accettare, a causa della guerra, le sue proposizioni. L'ho pregato di trattar con voi per la Germania, etc., etc.»; see *ibidem*, pp. 179-181.

²¹. *Ibidem*, pp. 182-185.

²². *The Letters of Beethoven*, edited by Emily Anderson, 3 vols., London, Macmillan, 1961, vol. 1 p. 230.

²³. See, for example, COOPER, Barry. 'The Clementi-Beethoven Contract of 1807: A Reinvestigation', in: *Muzio Clementi: Studies and Prospects*, edited by Roberto Illiano, Luca Lévi Sala and Massimiliano Sala, Bologna, Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2002 (MC, 61), pp. 337-353.

²⁴. The evidence for this paragraph is drawn from MILLIGAN, Thomas B. *Johann Baptist Cramer (1771-1858): A Thematic Catalogue of His Works*, Stuyvesant (NY), Pendragon Press, 1994 (Thematic catalogues, 19).

when the Continental System was inaugurated (see above). After that date, and until c1810, fewer works were appeared simultaneously in different countries as communications deteriorated. Perhaps surprisingly, however, the situation appears to have improved after c1810, although it was not until 1815 that publishers were routinely able to bring out their works on the same day in the major publishing centres such as London, Paris and Leipzig. From that time onwards publishers even began to include mention of publishers in more than one country on their title pages; Ferdinand Ries's Variations Op. 73, which were entered at Stationer's Hall on 18 April 1817, included the information of their title page that they were published by Clementi & Co. and Chappell & Co. in London and Peters in Leipzig.

In addition to the movement of musical instruments and editions around Europe, the composer/performers themselves also travelled from country to country in this period, although the practical arrangements sometimes proved difficult. Channel crossings, for example, were often problematic at this time for obvious reasons. These problems were irritating, but not insurmountable. But aside from these practical difficulties many musicians found that they were able to move about fairly freely, unless there were suspicions about their political loyalties, as there were, for example, when Viotti had to flee Paris in 1792 and when he was ordered out of England in 1798 because of his perceived sympathies with the French republican movement²⁵. It is also thought that Dussek fled France in the late 1780s because of his social connections, although the timing of his move to England, which was possibly before the end of 1788, may indicate an economic motive rather than a political one — France's economy was suffering more than England's at the time²⁶. Other musicians, however, were able to travel without any social or governmental interference. Clementi, who had acquired British citizenship in 1801, travelled around Europe without any known political interference throughout the first decade of the nineteenth century. Despite his reported legal problems, Steibelt moved freely between Paris and London, and around the rest of Europe, between 1790 and 1809, when he settled in Russia. During the same period Woelfl moved freely around the whole of Europe, including England. Nevertheless, some other pianists chose to stay well away from Paris altogether during the period under discussion, including Cramer, Hummel and Moscheles, for reasons which can only be conjectured.

Having discussed the movement of instruments, music and musicians around Europe, along with the other factors that affected the development of the music industry in the period, we can now assess the impact of the complex political, economic and social context on the development of French pianism from c1790 to c1820.

²⁵. SALA, Massimiliano. 'Preface', in: *Giovanni Battista Viotti: A Composer between the Two Revolutions*, edited by Massimiliano Sala, Bologna, Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2006 (Ad Parnassum Studies, 2), pp. xi-xii.

²⁶. ROWLAND, David. 'Dussek in London's Commercial World', *op. cit.* (see note 3), pp. 87-112.

DAVID ROWLAND

It is clear that the trade restrictions and consequent diminution of the influence of British piano manufacturers caused the French piano market to become progressively less and less dependent on Britain. More positively put, French makers began to produce increasingly distinctive instruments. However, for reasons to do particularly with the status of the grand piano in Paris, French piano makers were slow to capitalise on the opportunities that their new-found autonomy provided and, despite the fact that Erard's pianos were owned by illustrious individuals abroad such as Haydn and Beethoven, it was not until the 1830s that French makers were able to dominate the European market.

It is also clear that the impact of war caused international collaboration in music publishing to stall at the height of the Napoleonic wars. The increasingly cooperative environment that developed through the 1790s and into the early years of the new century took several steps backwards, especially between c1806 and 1810, only to be fully revitalized after 1815.

As for the pianists themselves, while there was reasonable freedom of movement in and out of Paris for many during the period a number of pianists left, or stayed away altogether from the city during this period. For example, influential figures such as Woelfl and Steibelt deserted Paris as the economy worsened towards the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding Dussek's impact on the piano scene after his return to Paris towards the end of his life there were few lengthy visits by major international figures during the worst of the war years.

The cumulative affect of all of this was that French pianism in the period c1790 to 1820 experienced a degree of isolation. It is notable, for example, that a good many piano works by those composers who remained in Paris, such as Adam, Boeildieu, the Jadin brothers and Ladurner, never saw the light of day in London, one of the most important publishing centres of the time, and they only rarely appeared elsewhere in Europe. Whilst this isolation should not be over-stated, it seems to have impeded the development of pianism in Paris, which became the capital of European pianism only after c1830.